

TESTIMONY OF THE
CONNECTICUT COALITION OF PROPERTY OWNERS

Before the Legislature's
HOUSING COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 4, 2014

HB 5438 AAC The Rights And Responsibilities Of Landlords And Tenants
Regarding Bed Bug Infestation.

Good Morning. My name is Marshall Collins. I am the Counsel for Government Relations for the Connecticut Coalition Of Property Owners ("CCOPO"). CCOPO represents the largest coalition of landlord property owners in Connecticut, with Chapters in Stamford, Bridgeport, Hartford, and other communities as well as the CT Association of Real Estate Investors. Collectively, CCOPO members own approximately 20,000 rental units throughout the state.

CCOPO requests that HB 5438 be amended.

CCOPO actively participated in 2013 efforts to draft a bill which would establish clear and straightforward guidelines regarding the respective responsibilities of tenants and landlords in dealing with bed bug infestations. CCOPO's objective was to establish a cooperative rather than adversarial relationship between landlords and tenants.

HB 5438 is similar to last year's bill (SB 952) on this same issue. CCOPO did not oppose last year's Senate version; however, CCOPO does believe that House Amendment 'C' "LCO#8423 to last year's bill would have been an improvement and should be included this year.

More specifically, the OLR Bill Analysis of the 2013 substitute Senate Bill 952 indicates that House Amendment "C," LCO 8423, would "...permit landlords to attempt to treat infestations themselves..". CCOPO believes this "self help" provision made sense for both landlords and tenants. There are landlords who are fully capable of effectively and responsibly treating bed bug infestations. Nor is there a scientific basis for concluding that landlords cannot effectively treat bed bug infestations.

CCOPO members understand that unless bed bug infestations are treated swiftly and effectively, it is likely to spread to adjacent units, which will only further increase their exposure and cost. Landlords and tenants must work together.

CCOPO members also believe that they can in certain instances respond more quickly than if they had to contact and bring in a "certified applicator."

Tenants must realize that they are responsible for treating their own unit as soon as an infestation is discovered. Landlords already understand that to protect their property when an infestation arises that they have to inspect and treat all the units around the infested unit as soon as possible.

The problem lies where either the tenant or the landlord cannot or is unable to address an infestation. If a tenant cannot effectively deal with an infestation, the landlord will have

to. If the landlord cannot effectively deal with an infestation, then landlords already know that calling in a "certified applicator" will be necessary to clean the tenant's unit as well as the remainder of the landlord's property.

It is possible for landlords to successfully treat infestations. CCOPO members have attested to that fact. Therefore, CCOPO respectfully requests that HB 5384 be amended to include the self help provisions contained in last session's House amendment "C" LCO#8423 to 2013 SB 952.

CCOPO remains willing to work with the Committee to help in the passage of a balanced approach to this issue. This completes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration.